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MARY STUART

A Play

By John Drinkwater

Author of

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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Mary Stuart

MARY STUART

A Play

By

JOHN DRINKWATER

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

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To

NORA AND ST. JOHN ERVINE

Mary Stuart

THE CHARACTERS ARE

ANDREW BOYD
JOHN HUNTER
MARY STUART
MARY BEATON
DAVID RICCIO
DARNLEY
THOMAS RANDOLPH
BOTHWELL

MARY STUART

A small library in ANDREW BOYD'S *house in Edinburgh. In the far wall is a fireplace, and to the right of it a high folding window. Above the fireplace is a large oil portrait of* MARY STUART.

It is late on a summer evening, and the window is open, giving on to a garden terrace, under which the town lies in the moonlight.

ANDREW BOYD, *who is seventy years old, sits at a small table with a young man,* JOHN HUNTER. BOYD, *wearing a black velvet coat and skull-cap, looks as Charles the First might have done had he achieved a fuller age.* HUNTER *is in evening clothes. The date is 1900 or later.*

Hunter: That's all. It's terrible.

Boyd: What do you propose to do?

Hunter: I don't know. What can I do?

Boyd: Did you merely want to tell me — or do you want my advice?

Hunter: Andrew, the few grains of wisdom I have I've picked up from you. At least, I think so. Help me — if there is any help.

Boyd: I don't know that I can guide your moods. That's difficult always between men. I can only try to tell you what I think. Is it worth while?

Hunter: Well?

Boyd: You and Margaret have been married five years, is n't it? It's not long, but it's a good deal in young lives.

Hunter: Five years — yes.

Boyd: They have been happy years, have n't they?

Hunter: Perfectly, until this.

Boyd: And now — by the way, have you ever cared for any other woman?

Hunter: No.

Boyd: No. And now there's Finlay. I've always liked Finlay. And his book on our Queen is the wisest word about her that I know.

Hunter: My God! It's funny, is n't it? Finlay on harlotry. I beg your pardon, Andrew.

Boyd: That's just it, my boy. Harlotry. The word buzzes in your brain, does n't it? I wonder. Do you want to understand at all — or do you just mean to be angry?

Hunter: It's easy enough to understand.

Boyd: No; never easy. It needs patience, and love.

Hunter: I understand, bitterly, because I love.

Boyd: It needs patience, and love. And there must be no confusion of pride.

Hunter: What do you mean?

Boyd: There are women whose talent it is to serve. And some are great lovers.

Hunter: Margaret's love is wonderful.

Boyd: Have you lost it?

Hunter: What does that mean? I tell you she loves Finlay.

Boyd: How do you know?

Hunter: She told me.

Boyd: It was not a secret that you surprised?

Hunter: No.

Boyd: Have you liked Finlay?

Hunter: I suppose so. Yes — it's the uglier for that.

Boyd: She told you at once?

Hunter: I think so. Yes, I'm sure of that.

Boyd: Did she say anything of her love for you?

Hunter: That it was untouched by this.

Boyd: Do you believe it?

Hunter: I don't know. How can it be?

Boyd: And some are great lovers. Do you want her love?

Hunter: That's absurd, Andrew.

Boyd: What is the most precious thing in the world to you? in your emotions?

Hunter: That is. You know.

Boyd: Or your sense of mastery in owning her?

Hunter: You can't refine things like that.

Boyd: But you must, or fall into the mere foolishness of life. You must answer yourself. Do you want to enjoy her love, or do you want to dominate it?

Hunter: How can I believe that what she gives to Finlay is n't taken from me?

Boyd: But suppose it were true. Suppose you had surety of that in your brain, that you could be certain in your heart that her love for him was no division, but a new thing — what then?

Hunter: I can't be sure.

Boyd: You don't want to be sure.

Hunter: You are an old man, Andrew, and my best friend.

Boyd: Yes, you are angry. You are afraid. You fear for your pride. And there is but one salvation. Perfect love casteth out fear.

Hunter: How could she? — how could she? I was so happy always — that at least seemed safe.

Boyd: I was never married, but I have understood women. Or I think so. That's an old man's compliment to himself. Men use them ill.

Hunter: But they can destroy us. Look at this.

Boyd: Yes, I know. They can be wild in the wits, too. But not as you mean. And they have the better excuse, perhaps. I want you to see this, John. It is you that are in peril of sin here, not she.

Hunter: But I have done nothing but love her.

Boyd: You have accused her.

Hunter: She accused herself.

Boyd: Accused?

Hunter: Call it what you will.

Boyd: Let us call it the right thing.

Hunter: Well?

Boyd: She did not accuse herself, I think. She trusted you, splendidly.

Hunter: That's oddly put, is n't it? The trusting, surely, was mine.

Boyd: I think not, not at least as you see it. What was it you trusted?

Hunter: Margaret's devotion.

Boyd: Her love of you, you mean?

Hunter: Yes, that.

Boyd: Has she betrayed your trust?

Hunter: What's the use of saying it over and over again?

Boyd: There's folly in it, my boy, and I want you to see it. I want you to see exactly where the betrayal is, so that whatever you do shall not be done blindly. You trusted Margaret's love. It is a wide thing, radiant, the capacity in her for loving?

Hunter: It made me a king.

Boyd: Very well. She gave her love to you, freely. I've seen it, and I know its richness. Suppose it had been a poor, mean thing, with no roots, subject to little, dark intrigues, lightly given and lightly taken away. Then this new interest, or any, would have been — what shall

we say — a peccadillo — something to hide, would n't it?

Hunter: I don't know. Perhaps. I suppose so.

Boyd: But Margaret is not made for these slight occasions, is she? You know that, or the better man in you knows it. It is the insignificant heart that is furtive, not worth loving. But Margaret hid nothing.

Hunter: I don't understand that part of it. That she told me does n't help the pity of it — but why did she tell me?

Boyd: I said. Because she loves you, and because she trusted you splendidly.

Hunter: Trusted me in what?

Boyd: To understand. That was beautiful homage to your love.

Hunter: What do you want me to believe?

Boyd (*rising and moving to the portrait of Mary Stuart*): She, too, was a great lover. I am an old man, and I have enjoyed many things. Life has been full, life here about me, and the life of history and the poets. And one has been as real as another. (*He moves to the open window and looks out.*) There in Edinburgh was

lived the saddest of all histories, the tragedy of all such women who are unlucky in their men — Margaret's tragedy, perhaps.

Hunter: But your Queen —

Boyd: No, don't be impatient. Mary Stuart is in my blood, I know, but I am thinking of your trouble only, John. Have you ever reflected on the strangeness of that Edinburgh story — the confusion of it, growing and growing through the years? History never so entangled itself. All the witnesses lied, and nearly all who have considered it have been absorbed in confirming this word, refuting that. And at the centre of it, obscured by our argument, is the one glowing reality, a passionate woman. Beside that, the rest is nothing, but we forget.

Hunter: What has this to do with Margaret?

Boyd: It is Margaret. These women — such women — can sometimes love so well that no man's nature can contain all that they have to give. There are men like that, too. And it is not a light love. The light lover has many, and rapidly shifting aims, but never two loyalties at once. But these others may love once, or twice, or often, but changelessly. They do not

love unworthily — it is lamentable when they love unworthy men.

Hunter: Is a man unworthy, thinking of his honour?

Boyd: You talk amiss, talking so. History seethes with the error, society is drenched with it. Mary Stuart cared nothing for your honour—nor does Margaret. The lovers are wiser than that.

Hunter: Then I've done with it.

Boyd: No, surely. What is this honour that you extol?

Hunter: My right, my dignity, my manhood.

Boyd: And you have lived with the philosophers and the poets. Verily a little wind against the reason in our own lives. John, boy, your honour is pride, a poor brute jealousy, cruelty. That is the truth. Will you learn it?

Hunter: You know nothing.

Boyd: I know all.

Hunter: She has failed me.

Boyd: Who are you who should be glad of this woman's love, that you should presume to confine it, to dictate its motions? Is your wife a light of love?

Hunter: I believed not.

Boyd: You know it. Or she would be worth nothing of your thought or your regret. Does she love Finlay finely — as you would be loved.

Hunter: As I —

Boyd: As you would be loved?

Hunter: How can I —

Boyd: No — answer honestly. You know.

Hunter: Well — yes. What then?

Boyd: Then if she love finely, she will take her love from no man unless he is unworthy. Are you that?

Hunter: I've done all I could.

Boyd: In your heart, before this anger came, you know you've been sound, fit for a woman like Margaret to love. You know it?

Hunter: I think so. Yes, Andrew.

Boyd: Then she loves two men —

Hunter: I won't have it! I won't share —

Boyd: Boy — will you not share the sun of heaven, the beauty of the world? What arrogance is this?

Hunter: I tell you she must choose.

Boyd: Be careful — or the choice will destroy you. And it will be of your making, not hers. Remember that.

Hunter: I gave her everything.

Boyd: It was a great gift. And Finlay's is that too, I think. Or was yours but a poor venture, the tribute of a little soul? Is Margaret to have no better luck than that poor queen? Down there at Holyrood. Look, in the moonlight. A woman of great wit — Margaret is that too. And nothing better coming to her than a scented pimp, a callow fool, and a bully. They should have been three great princes, masters of men. And just that.

(*A dog howls across the garden below*)

It's the moon. But her love was magnificent. And Margaret's is. A new unhappy queen? I wonder.

Hunter (*rising and moving to* BOYD): Look here, Andrew, you can't alter facts by filming them over with dead romances. I gave Margaret everything, and she wants to give me a part at best — nothing, may be. It's a bad bargain, and I won't make it. Damn that dog!

(*As it howls again*)

Why should I allow Finlay to meddle with my life?

Boyd: Your life is but a part of life. It began and it will go on in time beyond yourself. You and Margaret are a part of life, not of some little local interest of your own. Mary knew it. Do you know her poem? It's here.

(*He moves to the picture and reads from under it*)

Ill names there are, as Lethington,
  Moray, Elizabeth,
By craft of these I am undone,
  And love is put to death.

Though brighter wit I had than these,
  Their cunning brought me down,
But Mary's love-story shall please
  Better than their renown.

Mary the lover be my tale
  For the wise men to tell
When Moray joins Elizabeth
  And Lethington in hell.

Not Riccio nor Darnley knew
  Nor Bothwell how to find
This Mary's best magnificence
  Of the great lover's mind.

They sing it sometimes in Edinburgh still. How would you like Margaret to make such a song of you? "This Margaret's magnificence of the great lover's mind." There's a fellow who sings it some nights down there. And old Andrew Boyd hears it — three hundred years and more afterwards — and he knows the truths of it, as all wise men would. And John Hunter may be forgotten, not like a Mary Stuart, but the thing that John Hunter means will endure, always, and wise men would know the truth of it for ever.

Hunter: Would you madden me? Why?

(*A voice singing is heard away in the night, faintly*)

I would give anything to know that Margaret loves me — there. But, Finlay — what is there in Finlay that she can't find in me?

Boyd: A vast, separate, breathing creation of God. Would you dare to forbid a woman's love of that? You are ambitious.

Hunter: What would she say, do you think, if I loved this woman and that, here and there?

Boyd: She would despise you. Because you

think of it lightly, as an easy and deliberate thing. You don't mean love. You mean a trivial, feathery visiting, that does not know what love is. There he is — listen.

(*The voice below becomes articulate as the song ends*)

Mary the lover be my tale
For the wise men to tell
When Moray joins Elizabeth
And Lethington in hell.

Not Riccio nor Darnley knew
Nor Bothwell how to find
This Mary's best magnificence
Of the great lover's mind.

Hunter: It's a damned silly song. What's it all about? A dog singing, and a fool joining in, and you chattering against all sense.

(*He moves back to the table*)

Boyd: You are emphatic — the emphasis that knows it is misplaced. (*He goes again to the portrait.*) Look at this queen. She tells you, does n't she? Does n't she?

Hunter: What does a dead queen know about

me? You talk nonsense. The moon has your wits; you're like the crazy singer out there. Mary Stuart can tell me nothing, I say. My God! What's that?

(*A dress rustles outside on the terrace*)

Boyd: What's the matter?

(*He turns*)

Hunter: There — look — Who is it?

(MARY STUART *stands on the terrace at the window. She is the Queen of the portrait*)

Mary: Boy, I can tell you everything.

. . . . . .

(BOYD *and* HUNTER *and the portrait and the moonlit terrace pass into nothingness, and we see* MARY STUART'S *room in Holyrood on the evening of March the ninth, 1566.* MARY *is lying asleep on a couch,* MARY BEATON *seated beside her, reading. After a few moments the queen moves uneasily, and in again a few moments she wakes.*

Mary: Poor boy — poor boy. If he would but listen — but how strange. What a thing was that to dream! Out there — somewhere in

the moonlight — I listened. Dreams should be of the past, surely. That's the way of them, is n't it, Beaton?

Beaton: Of the past — yes — or timeless.

Mary: But this was of some far to-morrow. We are part of life for ever — we become what we are for ever. I heard the old man say it. I heard it in my dream.

Beaton: What was it, Madam?

Mary: How long have I slept?

Beaton: An hour, hardly.

Mary: I passed down the ages in an hour. It was in some life when I was an old and argued story. Generations and generations after us. A boy and his lover, and Mary Stuart breathing again in a new sorrow — the sorrow that is eternal.

Beaton: You are restless.

Mary: I was travelling far.

Beaton: Dreams are full of trickery for my part.

Mary: And sometimes they are the heart of us. How will it be told of me? I wonder. Not a man for ever, perhaps, to know the truth of it. But the old man knew. If it could be known

— that should be good counsel for all foolish lovers, I think. I know love, that at least. Beaton, the intrigues of Europe will destroy me — no, they will. But I know love. If it could be a light to all such poor boys! Where is Riccio?

Beaton: Shall I find him?

Mary: No, I asked incuriously.

Beaton: He grows more daring.

Mary: He sings well.

Beaton: Is that all, Madam?

Mary: Unhappily, with him too. Riccio, Darnley, Bothwell. You must not breathe a word of Bothwell, Beaton. That must not be known. But they make a poor, shabby company. Riccio sings, yes, ravishingly. And no more. Darnley cannot sing even, and he's my husband. Just a petulance — one cannot even be sorry for it. How he hates Riccio — I wish David were better worth hating. That would be something. And Bothwell wants to take me with a swagger. It's a good swagger, but that's the end of it. I think he will take me yet, the odds against him are pitiful enough. But it's a barren stock of lovers, Beaton. I, who could have made the greatest greater.

Beaton: He may come.

Mary: Craft is against me, my friend. I shall have no leisure to find the great one. Lethington works, and my brother Moray works. And Elizabeth waits. Elizabeth of England — they will do as she wishes. She knows it, and I know. I am too beautiful for her. She has poets who call her beautiful, too. If Mary were their queen, what a song it would be! She knows it. It's a little secret satisfaction, that.

BEATON: You match them all, Madam, in wits.

Mary: I shall know that till the end. But the end will be to their hand. Fools for lovers, and fools to destroy me. Proudly I shall know that always, being above them in love and wisdom. But love will cheat me, and my wisdom will spare me nothing. That is how it is for me. Riccio is not near?

Beaton: (*opening the door*): No, Madam.

Mary: Then listen. This is made for myself, but you shall hear it.

(*She sings*)

Ill names there are, as Lethington,
Moray, Elizabeth,
By craft of these I am undone,
And love is put to death.

Though brighter wit I had than these,
Their cunning brought me down,
But Mary's love-story shall please
Better than their renown.

Mary the lover be my tale
For the wise men to tell
When Moray joins Elizabeth
And Lethington in hell.

Not Riccio nor Darnley knew
Nor Bothwell how to find
This Mary's best magnificence
Of the great lover's mind.

Beaton: It's well done.
Mary: Truly, at least.
Beaton: Your hair?
Mary: Yes.
Beaton (*arranging it*): If I were a queen —
Mary: No, Beaton, you would n't, I've told

you that often enough. The nets are too strong, too well cast. If the Queen's luck is bad, it must be the Queen's luck still. We do not make our choice. The rewards do not consider us. No — the blue pin, so. Hugo Dubois, in an elaborate treatise on the coiffure, says, "Women of a fair complexion, coming at night into company, do much affect azure or lazuline gems for the hair, as it were cornflowers in sunny corn; and to my mind it does well become them." There — that will do, Beaton.

(*A knock at the door*)

Who is it?

(BEATON *goes to the door and opens it. It is* RICCIO)

Riccio: You are employed, Madam?

Mary: No. Come in, David. Let us be idle. Presently, Beaton.

(BEATON *goes*)

Riccio: Idle? Yes, lady, to receive homage is a business light enough.

Mary: To receive homage lightly given.

Riccio: Yet all queens have found it in their profession, they say. And lightly given? Worth-

less, if you will, but not that. Not of Riccio, Madam.

Mary: You correct me.

Riccio: I know you as you do not yourself.

Mary: This Holyrood is a grey place. A little phrase will tell.

Riccio: It is the chosen palace of the world.

Mary: Yes, your gallantry has an echo, David, a dear one.

Riccio: Let it be that. I will serve even so.

Mary: France — it is a word that I think will become surfeiting in time, it is so beautiful. France. Too sweet, men will say, lilies too often sung, and stale. But how precious it is! They can love there.

Riccio: We are of the south.

Mary: Yes, you have a good suit there.

Riccio: If you would but listen.

Mary: I listen, daily.

Riccio: I do not persuade well.

Mary: You spare nothing.

Riccio: I am suspect in the palace, more and more. Your lord the King, chiefly.

Mary: Do you stay in Scotland for popularity? They do not choose your kind, David.

Riccio: Every mile of it is abominable. But I stay, eagerly.

Mary: Why?

Riccio: It is adorable of you to answer so yourself.

Mary: Your wit survives.

Riccio: But you shall not steal my pleasure. You ask, to hear me say it. Yes — I beg — it is so. I stay because the compass moves with you. The south has all the enchantments of the heart; there are the spices and the music. I can breathe only there; life is valuable only in that zone of supreme devotions. And where you are, is the south. That is why I stay. It's the answer you foresaw?

Mary: Riccio, with so many advantages. And yet — man, could I but speak for you!

Riccio: I need no ambassadors, Madam.

Mary: But you do, Riccio. I could prompt you — but, no.

Riccio: My phrases lack — ah, they grow rusty in these damp airs.

Mary: The phrases are well enough. They would pass in the most elegant of courts, David. Or you should take them to my sister, Eliza-

beth. She collects them — half the poets of England send her mottoes in this kind. They know better, but it humours her. I myself can match them — excel them, Pierre Ronsard tells me. But what have these to do with me? I have a husband.

Riccio: A husband?

Mary: And he is nothing. I should, being Mary Stuart, forget him, but he hangs about the place. And I say that to you, David, to you, licensed with the graces of my lovely France, and with some favours in your remembrance, eh? And what do you answer?

Riccio: Answer?

Mary: God, man, yes, answer.

Riccio: If my lord the King fails, may not I —

Mary: Console my — exile?

Riccio: It is allowed.

Mary: A justifiable intrigue? Commendable, even?

Riccio: You know it, Madam.

Mary: And what is your device for the occasion, David?

Riccio: To tell you this — always and al-

ways — you are the queen of all beauty, the adorable fragrance of —

Mary: No better than that? You lamentable steward.

Riccio (*taking her hand*): I love you, Mary.

Mary (*moving from him*): And you can say that, and make it no better than an impertinence.

Riccio: I love you — I will take you — so.

Mary: You have not the stature, my poor David. Listen. I meant no anger. Sing to me, often. Your songs come out of a cherished life. Flatter me sometimes if you will — I am queen enough to thank my courtiers — and they do not much breed them here in Scotland. And your manners adorn ceremony always — I do not undervalue that — the example is needed. I must not lose you, David; I take pleasure in your company, in your amiability — it is not common. And be content — you will find in this all necessary satisfaction — I shall not starve your nature. But it will be well for us not to speak again of love.

Riccio: To be forbidden that —

Mary: It will be an agreeable distress, never fear. And perhaps in some fortunate, some —

unaccustomed moment of understanding, you may make a song of me. If it should be so, remember this — you will make little enough of it now, but, then, remember it, if you would make the song well. Mary Stuart was a queen of love, but she had no subjects. She was love's servant, but she found no lord. That is all.

Riccio: No subjects? It is cruel to say that — you know.

Mary: No subjects. Only strangers at the table.

Riccio: I do not understand you, Mary.

Mary: You have said it.

Riccio: I give you myself — all my poet's heart. Is it not enough?

Mary: You are neither subject nor lord. There is no peace in you, David. Just a buzzing in the jar.

Riccio: There are men whose pride you should learn for less than this.

Mary: Ah, then.

Riccio: But my devotion will stay.

Mary: It will satisfy you. It is all that matters. And I am grateful. You are a good secretary, David.

Riccio: What is the love you look for?

Mary: Rest from tumult. Escape. You could not know.

Riccio: No. But I pity you.

Mary: I should reprove you for that. But it's a good venture, the best you could make. It might trouble you. But it will pass. You will think of yourself only to console; that will be your safety.

Riccio: You will not let them dismiss me? I am happy here.

Mary: It is right that you should be happy. You shall stay, never fear.

Riccio: To serve you always. I can give light and air a little, that at least. I should have been king in this place.

Mary (*giving him her hand to kiss*): Now you may sing to me.

Riccio (*singing*):

The snows come, and frosty pools
  Forbid the birds to sing.
The pilgrim of the wilderness
  Complains the tardy spring.

One sits at home in winter ease,
And one goes out to find
In thought of one, the third who waits,
But bitterness of mind.

(*As he sings,* DARNLEY *comes in unseen. He sits, at the far side of the room, listening*)

Who plays with love, beats up and down
The snow beyond the gate.
Who plays with love is like to tell
A spring for ever late.

But this I say, if Holyrood
Had crowned a proper king,
These grey walls had the blossoms worn
Of an eternal spring.

Darnley (*not moving — after a silence*): King David, for example?

Riccio (*rising*): Sire — we did not know — it was just a rhyme.

Darnley (*rising*): We did not know — we did not know —

Riccio: Not that—I mean—you startled me.

Darnley: David Riccio—you think I'm a fool.

Riccio: Sire —

Darnley: Well — I'm not. It's a mistake to think it. I could make rhymes like that by the bushel if they were worth it. It's a very ugly song, that.

Mary: It was nothing, my lord. A tune for idleness.

Darnley: I am instructed.

Riccio: Shall I make such a one for the King?

Darnley: As this was for the Queen?

Riccio: If I have not offended. Would it be Your Grace's pleasure.

Darnley: There may not be time.

Riccio: Time?

Darnley: Yes, you know, by the clock. It passes. Tick, tick, tick, tick — and you never know. A rhyme, for instance. You get one line, and then two, and another, and the end may come, suddenly. In kings' palaces, that is. Who knows?

Riccio (*afraid*): We minstrels delight in parables. You speak in a fine figure, my lord. But — you do not mean that my poor song has angered you?

Darnley: A thought only for your next. A suggestion. The poet, and time, passing, tick,

tick, tick, and the rhyme on the lips, and then — as you will. I give it you — it may help invention.

Riccio: And — it means nothing more?

Mary: Come, David, how should it? (*Directly to him.*) Poets are men, I hope.

Riccio: Surely, Madam. I will work upon it, Sire. A sonnet, perhaps — no, a ballade — and yet, for the lute —

Darnley: Consider it. (*Going to the door.*) There is a moon. It helps, I am told.

(*He signs for* RICCIO *to go*)

Riccio: Your Grace, I am sure, would not misjudge me.

Darnley. No.

(RICCIO *goes*)

Mary: What is it?

Darnley: Shamelessly — so.

Mary: What do you mean?

Darnley: Always at your ear.

Mary: Well?

Darnley: What has he been saying to you?

Mary: It would be tedious.

Darnley: What is he, this fellow? Your lover?

Mary: What then?

Darnley: Am I King of Scotland?

Mary: Have you — forgotten?

Darnley: Is he your lover?

Mary: If he were?

Darnley: Am I to be common gossip in Edinburgh?

Mary: Is that all? No; he is not my lover.

Darnley: They talk. The Queen, they say, has a sweet instructor.

Mary: I have need of such.

Darnley: What is the instruction?

Mary: Ask your gossips. The word is not mine.

Darnley: Will you dismiss this man?

Mary: But why should I? He is a competent secretary. He sings prettily. He has a grace. Why should I lose him?

Darnley: Because I ask it.

Mary: But I do not remember you.

Darnley: What wit is that?

Mary: You speak as one privileged to control my affections. I do not remember such a one.

Darnley: This man governs you.

Mary: Alas, no.

Darnley: He guides your policy. The courts of Europe begin to talk of it.

Mary: Poor David. He just sits at the table, and writes as I tell him. There's more policy in a carter.

Darnley: And he is not your lover?

Mary: No.

Darnley: Then he would be little to lose.

Mary: And yet why should I lose even so little?

Darnley: I do not believe you.

Mary: So? And then?

Darnley: You choose strangely.

Mary: I chose you, God help me.

Darnley: That's ugly.

Mary: What would you have?

Darnley: What is it to be?

Mary: How?

Darnley: I have some rights still, at least.

Mary: You are called King.

Darnley: Then my word should mean something.

Mary: For what?

Darnley: Dismiss Riccio.

Mary: No.

Darnley: Be careful. We are not in France.

Mary: You destroy yourself very thoroughly, Darnley.

Darnley: Dismiss him — or I'll have it sung in every tavern in Edinburgh. Or worse.

Mary: Do you love me?

Darnley: What — how do you mean?

Mary: That's plain enough, man, is n't it?

Darnley: I have my pride.

Mary: And what of mine? I'm hungry — do you understand? All this — my body, and my imagination. Hungry for peace — for the man who can establish my heart. What do they say — a light lover, unsure always. And who is there to make me sure? What man is there with authority? Where is he who shall measure me? Listen, my husband. There are tides in me as fierce as any that have troubled women. And they are restless, always, always. Do you think I desire that? Do you think that I have no other longings — to govern with a clear brain, to learn my people, to prove myself against these foreign jealousies, to see strong children about me, to play with an easy festival mind, to walk the evenings at peace? Do you

think I choose this hungry grief of passion — deal in it like a little poet? All should be resolved and clear in me, with a king to match my kingdom. My love is crazed, a turbulence, without direction. It was made to move in long, deep assurance, moulding me beyond my knowledge. I, who should be love, may but burn and burn with the love that I am not. Where is my prophet? Everywhere blind eyes. I took you, I wedded you, I made you King. And you mince, and gossip, and listen at the door. I could have taught you the finest husbandry that Scotland has ever known. And your soul's policy brings you to this. Your craft — the craft of Scotland's excellence — against the poor half-wit of David Riccio. And you have your pride!

Darnley: That, at least. For me the rest is past.

Mary: It has never been.

Darnley: No matter — my pride is my pride, I tell you. Riccio goes, one way or another. I know my own will — you can't preach me out of that. (*At the window.*) Look at them, virtuous men and bad men, priests and wenches,

liars and gospel, game and the hunters — but all of them with a streak of beastliness in them for the relish of a bawdy tale. And they shall have it. A wallet full of jingles can be bought for a few pence, or I have a turn myself:

Who's in the Queen's chamber?
Master Italian Thrift.
What's the Queen wearing?
Her long hair and her shift.

Mary: And where's the King of Scotland
To strike us as we sing?
And where's the King of Scotland?
There is no King.

Darnley: I won't have it — do you hear me?

Mary: I do.

Darnley: Again, will you dismiss Riccio?

Mary: Must I again? No.

Darnley: Then it is your reckoning. We'll spare you the bawdy songs, perhaps.

Mary: I should.

Darnley: But watch your David — watch him, I say. Keep him close. That's generous of me — to warn you. Perhaps now — this min-

ute, or to-morrow, or to-night. Suspect every footstep. But I tread lightly. A poor king, but a light step — thus — do you see? (*He creeps to his words towards the door.*) Thus — thus — thus — there's a Queen in there, and her lover — a dirty lover — thus we go, and thus — be very watchful, Madam, very — do you hear them? — the Queen and her dirty lover — that tongue should be stilled — it is n't decent, is it? Then thus, and thus, — a light, light tread, eh? — and thus — ssh!

(*He goes out*)

(MARY, *watching him go, laughs, but then, with misgiving, she rings a bell, and* MARY BEATON *comes*)

Beaton: Yes, Madam?

Mary: Did you see anything — out there?

Beaton: I saw the King pass down the stairs.

Mary: Did he speak?

Beaton: I don't think he saw me. He walked oddly — on tiptoe, as though something were at the corner. And as he went out of sight he half turned, and put his finger to his lip, and said, "Ssh!" very quietly, like that.

Mary: He's a poor thing, very inconsiderable. But it may happen.

Beaton: What, Madam?

Mary: He threatens Riccio.

Beaton: Cannot you satisfy him?

Mary: No. But I have no wish to.

Beaton: We must warn Riccio.

Mary: It would be useless. No, David must take his chance. He knows that there's danger. It's wrong, though, that so slight a man as Darnley should be able to hurt me even so much. Riccio's no matter, really. But if my lord touches him he shall pay as though Riccio were all. Where is Riccio?

Beaton: He was in the yard there, looking out over the town, scraping moss from the wall with his finger. He seemed nervous, I thought.

Mary: That would be monstrous — to have such a man made into a great stake. But it may be.

(DARNLEY *is heard singing below the window*)

Who's in the Queen's chamber?
Master Italian Thrift.
What's the Queen wearing?
Her long hair and her shift.

Mary: That's the King of Scotland.

Beaton: Why not send Riccio away? Why let him be, as you say, a great stake?

Mary: Because there is no other. Because my mind is lost, Beaton. Darnley, Riccio, Bothwell — there's a theme for a great heart to play. And there's so much to do. I have talent — as rare as any in Europe. It should be my broad road — that and my love. And I cannot use it, for my love is beaten up like dust, blinding me. Wanton, it is said. No woman, I think, was ever so little wanton. To be troubled always in desires — that's to be cursed, not wanton. Little frustrations, and it should be the wide and ample movement of life. I want to forget it all — wholly to become it. And there are Darnley, Riccio, Bothwell. And my power lies unused, it rusts. If I could find peace, if there were but a man to match me, my power should work. Elizabeth should see an example in Scotland. I would defend queenship, and I am brought to defend a poor Italian clerk.

Beaton: Why consider him, or any one of them?

Mary: It's a madness, is n't it? But that's the way. Love is that. We must become love, or it spends us. I am not Mary Stuart — she is a dream unspelt. I am nothing. There should have been a queen, and I am nothing.

(RICCIO *comes in, scared*)

Riccio: Madam, forgive me, I don't know what he means — my lord the King. He came up to me, and peered into my face, strangely, and tapped me on the shoulder, and said, "Thieves have irons, and the crow comes, and the south's as cold as the east." He means me harm.

Mary: Come, David, men should have sudden minds. Calamity is with fortune. Courage, friend.

Riccio: He came to me from below. He's wandering about like a silly ghost. He went back.

(*He moves to the window. Before he gets there,* DARNLEY *is heard again*)

Who's in the Queen's chamber?
Master Italian Thrift.
What's the Queen wearing?
Her long hair and her shift.

Riccio: What's that? Why does he sing that, under the window?

Mary: It's a brave house for a queen, Beaton, is n't it?

Darnley (*from below*): There's more yet.

(*He sings again*)

Is there a scullion greedy
For a crown and a queen's kiss . . .

(MARY *takes a pitcher of wine and, moving to the window, empties it at a venture*)

Darnley: Curse you — you harlot — you shall see —.

(*His voice fades away;* MARY *stands, holding the pitcher*)

Mary: The daughter of France. Pupil of Ronsard. Queen of Scotland.

(DARNLEY *rushes in, his face and clothes dripping with wine*)

Darnley: Do you think I will be used so — not by any queen in Christendom.

Mary: Do we talk of using?

(*She replaces the pitcher*)

Darnley: Do you call me stock? A thing for japes — to be mocked at by a harlot and her creeping filth?

Mary: So, we sing our bawdry at the Queen's window? Where is the King to whip such fellows?

Darnley: We know the window from another.

Mary: Where is the King, I say?

Darnley: Looking to his own. David Riccio, I spoke too gently in the yard now. Thieves are honest men — but there are rascals, Italian spawn, creeping things — and heels.

Beaton: My lord, this is the Queen's chamber.

Darnley: Aye, the Queen's chamber — that's it. There are heels, I say — and until then, so —

(*He spits in* RICCIO'S *face, and rushes out*)

Riccio (*moving across to* MARY, *and kneeling to her*): He's mad, he should be held. What shall I do, Madam?

Mary: What shall the Queen do?

Riccio: I am afraid.

Mary: Afraid of what?

Riccio: They hate me here. He has fellows. It will not be safe for me anywhere in Holyrood.

Let me go back to France — Your Majesty can contrive it. I must go.

Mary: Go.

(RICCIO *rises and hesitates*)

Go. Stay in your room. You shall not be forgotten. Go, I say.

(RICCIO *goes, lamentably*)

Beaton: Madam, Madam.

Mary: The measuring is bad, bad. There are matters that the mind must leave. Could you find my lord Bothwell, do you think?

Beaton: I will try.

Mary: If you will. Or stay, send to Randolph first. Ask him to come here. When he goes, find Bothwell if you can.

(BEATON *goes.* MARY *unlocks a cabinet, and takes out a picture of Elizabeth, in a jewelled frame, and a paper. The picture she places conspicuously on the top of the cabinet, the paper on the table. Then from the cabinet she takes a small green cloth case, which also she places on the table. She locks the cabinet, and stands on the far side from the door.* BEATON *returns*)

Beaton: Sir Thomas Randolph is here, Madam.

Mary: We will receive him.

(BEATON *moves to the door, and* SIR THOMAS RANDOLPH, *Elizabeth's Ambassador at Holyrood, comes in.* BEATON *goes.* RANDOLPH *kneels to* MARY, *who gives him her hand. He rises.* MARY *points him to a chair. They both sit*)

Mary: Have you more news of our cousin?

Randolph: Her Majesty's physician reports complete recovery.

Mary: You comfort me. Even so slight an indisposition is watched by the world with anxiety.

Randolph: I sent special word to my mistress of Your Majesty's concern.

Mary: I count you always among my true friends. That is to be in a small band, Sir Thomas.

Randolph: I am very sensible of the honour, Madam.

Mary: My cousin and I should meet. Such affection should not suffer so long a delay.

Randolph: Her Majesty, I know, is of a like mind.

Mary: If I could but leave this turbulent court for a time. But, alas, I may not. Can we not persuade the Queen to grace our rough life, think you? She is well served. With such counsellors she could leave with an easy heart. The throne of England knows no insecurities.

Randolph: Her Majesty talks of it often.

Mary: Do you think she will so favour us?

Randolph: I am sure of her inclinations.

Mary: And yet, perhaps, not quite sure.

Randolph: Madam?

Mary: Randolph, I am a woman beset by fools and rascals. Do with that as you will. If I could meet my cousin of England, word to word, she might learn much.

Randolph: She desires that.

Mary: I wonder. To learn might mean admissions. And admissions are dangerous, are they not, even royal admissions?

Randolph: Your Majesty speaks by figures.

Mary: No; plainly. You have your poets. They should tell you what a figure is. But I speak plainly.

Randolph: And yet, Madam, not plainly for so plain a man.

Mary: Ambassador from the court of England? No, Randolph. Elizabeth sends no poor brains on her business. Though I have heard that her wages do not always measure the service.

Randolph: Madam —

Mary: There, there — it's no treason to hear. And I am not a subject of England — yet.

Randolph: A subject?

Mary: One might be a subject of England, or one might be Queen of England — eh, Randolph?

Randolph: Your Majesty can instruct me.

Mary: A subject — or no, that's unlikely; a forfeit rather. Or Queen. Is it not so?

Randolph: How could I say, Madam?

Mary: Does not Elizabeth say it?

Randolph: Elizabeth?

Mary: Yes, man. Does she not say it?

Randolph: I cannot say that I have heard Her Majesty —

Mary: Come, Randolph, you are not uninformed. Does she not say it, and fear it?

Randolph: You insist above my knowledge, Madam.

Mary: Then answer this, as an honest man. If I leave my kingdom here to its dangers for such time as it may need to travel into England, will the Queen welcome me — receive me even?

Randolph: I can hardly answer that, Madam, here.

Mary: Do it by messenger, Sir Thomas, and say no. Not — "the Queen's High Majesty laments that these present dispositions of her realm" — and so forth in some Cecilian strain, but, bluntly, no.

Randolph: You speak hardly.

Mary: I defend myself. That is all. Though defence is nothing. You might let our cousin know, in some lighter moment, perhaps, that Mary Stuart thought thus — that if she could have found peace and not have been destroyed by base and little lovers, she would have met and instructed the surest wits of England, and have delighted in the match; but that, being tired, she said it was no matter. Enough, then, but this. Cunning has no pleasure when the heart is breaking. If I ask my cousin to appoint a day, she will not do it.

Randolph: If I might advance the matter as I can —

Mary: Oh, be simple about it, Randolph. Forget your diplomacy — I'm not worth it. Moreover, fate has touched me, and I have a discovering vision. Your genius, my poor ambassador, fades in the climate of my grief. Policy shines when it is pitted against interest. But my interest knows the doom that is coming. Let us talk as friends, with death appointed. I shall not betray you.

Randolph: Madam, I have my allegiance. But all that devotion may offer is yours. And you speak too hopelessly.

Mary: No. Hope I have mastered — that, at least. I shall not want courage, and it may be years. And I shall make a good end. That is all.

Randolph: If some affairs could but be composed, the Queen, I am sure, has good will to you and Scotland.

Mary: To Scotland — where is Scotland, which faction is to be called Scotland? And for me, I tell you, no. Her hope is my destruction; you know it. If I stand before Europe in honour, how long can my cousin delay naming me to her succession?

Randolph: It is her daily dread.

Mary: Dread?

Randolph: Anxiety.

Mary: Dread will do. She fears a Catholic invasion of her throne. That's as may be, but she fears it. My nomination would foster it, she says to herself, daily, in dread. My discrediting would be fortunate. She must be hungry for any word against me — that could be used. There would be royal thanks — if no more — for news of Mary Stuart's offending. Could she be shown as a wanton, let us say; or, better, would she but provoke my lord Darnley to some violence — what possibilities were in that! What nets!

Randolph: It is grievous that you should think so.

Mary: Think? Are there not letters? Secrets that miscarry? Messages that are overheard? England has her eyes, who knows at what keyhole, and we must profit by example. Even I have those about me who are diligent. (*She unfolds paper on the table.*) "To His Grace, my Lord of Leicester, from Sir Thomas Randolph, Ambassador at Holyrood from the Court of

England. My lord, I learn that the quarrel between Her Majesty and the King grows. He of whom I told Your Lordship has many marks of her favour, which the King has been heard to say do much discredit him to be so slighted for an Italian jay. So far that much is intended, as I think, against the intruder, even to extremity, which indeed may also glance at Majesty itself, and so strike as it were to the root. Or if that be not so and Master David only be practised against, then the Queen's anger must be such as will not easily be paid, and all that is hoped for may be between her and the King. I am, my lord, Your Lordship's humble servant, Thomas Randolph."

Randolph: Madam, I have but to convey what falls out. I set it down, merely. I desire nothing.

Mary: "All that is hoped for."

Randolph: By some.

Mary: By my cousin. But we needed no letters. It shall not be kept against you. (*She gives him the letter.*) And I have a mind that will care for no reckoning — you need not fear. You do but — set it down. But I wished you to

know. I shall lose, but I know what moves in the dark. There are no surprises, be sure of that.

Randolph: Is there anything that Your Majesty would have me do?

Mary: Be a little sorry for your office, that is all. And remember me as I might have been. You know.

Randolph: You should have been fortunate, Madam. You would have borne it greatly.

Mary: You are right about Darnley. He sings bawdy songs at my window.

Randolph: That is lamentable.

Mary: No, it is part of the story. You might have heard him half an hour since. But do not believe all that you hear. David Riccio is nothing. I protect him, as I would my spaniel. But he will serve England's purpose well enough. Let it be. You play your recorder still?

Randolph: Yes, but indifferently.

Mary: Well, I thought when I heard you. Here is a precious one, of very mellow tone. (*She takes it from its case.*) It belonged to our French poet, Pierre Ronsard. Keep it for my sake. I ask nothing in return. There is nothing

you can do. Ronsard was a chivalrous poet. I would have you keep it.

Randolph: It shall instruct me, Madam.

(*They rise, and he kneels as she again gives him her hand*)

Mary: Adieu.

Randolph: Madam.

(*He goes*)

(MARY *moves to an open prayer-book and turns the leaves*)

Mary (*reading, very quietly, to herself*): "And in the evening they will return: grin like a dog, and will go about the city. . . . Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for thou, O God, art my refuge, and my merciful God."

(*She stands silent for a moment. Then rings the bell beside her.* BEATON *comes*)

Mary: Did you find my lord Bothwell?

Beaton: He waits your word.

Mary: Ask him to come. First draw the curtains and light the candle.

(BEATON *does so, while* MARY *reads again the same passage aloud*)

"And in the evening they will return: grin like a dog, and will go about the city. . . . Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for thou, O God, art my refuge, and my merciful God."

(BEATON *goes and* MARY *closes the book. She stands at the desk, her back to the door.* BOTHWELL *appears*)

Bothwell: Madam.

Mary (*half turning*): My lord.

Bothwell: You sent for me.

Mary: You were not seen to come?

Bothwell: No. Not that I care for all their eyes.

Mary: But you must. I have small reason to cherish security, I know; that is past. But this would confuse things too much. They will destroy me, but I will not help them too generously. So this must not be known.

Bothwell: I understand.

Mary: Will you help me?

Bothwell: Madam, I have no interest but to please myself. To please you is that.

Mary: Darnley threatens Riccio.

Bothwell: Shall I trip Darnley? But why

should one be concerned for Riccio? There should be better ambitions.

Mary: They think he's my lover. Or Darnley occupies his mind in a pretence that he thinks it. Let him think it—it is no matter.

Bothwell: Surely not Riccio?

Mary: No. But I did not send for you to question me. Riccio has served me well enough in his kind. I remember these things. He is in danger, and he must be saved. That is all.

Bothwell: What can I do?

Mary: He must leave Scotland, secretly, and at once. Can you contrive that?

Bothwell: It could be done. There is a Dane in port now. I will give word to the captain. I have his service. Tell Riccio to meet me at midnight, by Frobisher's Croft. I will have a fellow to take him out from shore. When they are clear they can carry a light, and the Dane shall take him up. He can make his own way from Copenhagen?

Mary: Surely. Riccio shall be there at midnight. And my thanks.

(*She offers her hand*)

Bothwell (*taking it*): No more?

Mary: It must not be. No — not yet.

Bothwell: I fear for your safety.

Mary: Why should you fear?. I do not.

Bothwell: But you must. Danger moves everywhere.

Mary: I am on terms with danger. I am used to it.

Bothwell: But for those who love you —

Mary: Those — who are they?

Bothwell: For me who love you.

Mary: Man, do you love me so well?

Bothwell: You know it.

Mary: You believe it.

Bothwell: Why do you deny yourself always, thus? Why do you not believe my devotion? What gain is there in this refusal and refusal? Come away with me. Your throne means nothing to you as the time is — your authority is drained on every side — you are threatened daily. The lords work against you — England waits the moment that seems to her to be almost here — the certain moment. Leave it all. Come with me.

Mary: No, it cannot be. All would be lost then irrevocably.

Bothwell: You do not want courage?

Mary: Perhaps.

Bothwell: Take it from me.

Mary: It would be none, so. But I do not think my courage is at fault. Your love could not better me; I fear that.

Bothwell: You want my love, burningly you want it.

Mary: I know — yes. But for an enterprise like that love must be durable. Yours would fail — it is not a fault in you, but it would.

Bothwell: Even so, what then has been lost?

Mary: A shadow merely — a hope, a little hope, I do not know of what — but that out of some fortunate moment, somehow it might come.

Bothwell: What?

Mary: The love that should save me.

Bothwell: But time goes. Danger is here now. And I love you, now. Your love, your shadow — where is that?

Mary: I know. But in my heart it is all I have left. Nothing, a poor nothing — but all. If I go with you, it is but one step farther into the darkness, the last. Even the shadow would

be lost. I am too wise in grief. I am wiser even than my blood. That's lamentable, is n't it? But I have come to that.

Bothwell: Woman, why do you waste yourself among crowns and pedlars? Who is Elizabeth — who Darnley? What is Scotland, a black country, barren, that it should consume this beauty? You were born to love, to mate strongly, to challenge passion — this passion, I tell you, this. They come to you, and plead as peevish boys, or watch round corners — winds that cannot stir one tress of that hair. You are not aware of them, you are unmoved. But I am not as these — do you think I will wait and wait? I do not plead. (*Taking her in his arms.*) You are in my arms — you are no queen, you are my subject. If you stay they will destroy your throne — if you stay you will destroy yourself. You have fires. Can you quench them? Mary, my beloved, I am stronger than you. Come, I bid it.

(MARY *stays a moment, bound in his arms. Then she slowly releases herself*)

Mary: It is magnificent. But I told you. I am wiser than my blood.

Bothwell (*again moving to her*): Mary — Mary! You know it, you know.

Mary: Don't. Think!

Bothwell: I have thought, and it is enough. You may desert all, but not this.

Mary: Listen. You woo well — boldly, at least. Better than Darnley ever did, and Riccio has no more than a little elegance. And he whines. So did Darnley. But you have courage. You are aflame, and I kindle — yes, I tell you so much. What then? Should we leave Scotland? No. Queens are limed. And here, what is there for us but stealthy moments, fugitive? I should burn to them, but they would but add more smother to my life. I do not know what may come — I love you, yes, if you will — but no hope is in it, none. For I must tell you. I am of those who must be loved always, for all things, for there to be any peace in love. If you, or any man, could fathom that — — ah, then! And of such I could be the queen of one, or many. That is not wanton — that is a wisdom that life tells to just one here and there. I have it in my brain, but it will not be used. The wisdom will fade away in my brain, wither

to a cold little philosophy, and I shall die, and it will have been betrayed, because none came. It is my fortune. You love me now, you love my beauty. It needs love, it cherishes your love, it sings back to your hot words. But my beauty is not all. It will pass, and I should be unsatisfied. For you could not love me always, for all things. There is nothing between us but the minute. You could give me that, but you have nothing else to give.

Bothwell: And then? Shall the minute be denied?

Mary: That's good. You make no pretence, even. But remember, there is no hope in it, there can be none. Even were Darnley less husband than he is, and I free to take you to the throne, there would still be but the minute between us. You are not the man. He will not come.

Bothwell: I am no schemer in my love. Policy's a game — there I'm all wits. But love comes, and is now. You are beautiful, Mary. You betray no one. What remorse can there be?

Mary: Remorse? No, love is remorseless. But frustration, always, always.

Bothwell: Not of our minute — not of that, I say.

Mary: No, then, not of that.

(BOTHWELL *again takes her in his arms, she giving herself passionately. After a moment, they part, as* MARY BEATON'S *voice is heard*)

Beaton (*calling from without*): Madam — Madam.

Mary: Yes, what is it?

Beaton: Madam.

Mary: Yes, yes — come in.

Beaton (*entering*): Madam, the King is crossing the yard — he may be coming here.

Mary (*to* BOTHWELL): You must go.

Bothwell: Why should we slink about for any king?

Mary: No — you must. There are confusions enough. (*She looks out from the window.*) Yes, he is coming. Go through the close — quickly. At midnight, remember.

(BOTHWELL *kisses her hand and goes*)

Beaton: You play very dangerously, Madam.

Mary: Beaton, love should be lucky for you.

I think it will. But for me . . . He took me in his arms — a moment's fury — fire to slake fire, and that is all. That is my most of love. Why should I not be dangerous?

Beaton: Do you love my lord Bothwell?

Mary: A little of me — a moment. There is so much else to deny myself, after all. But he means so little more than the others. Still, a little — it is something.

(DARNLEY *comes in*)

Darnley: Where has he gone?

Mary: Who?

Darnley: Who? The Italian.

Mary: He is in his room, I think.

Darnley: I saw him go down the far stair as I came in from the yard.

Mary: You are mistaken, I think. Beaton, will you see?

(BEATON *goes out*)

Darnley: You know his movements well. But some one went down.

Mary: You are curious.

Darnley: Yes, Madam. I must watch these fellows.

Mary: Fellows?

Darnley: Who knows — one, and another, perhaps.

(BEATON *returns*)

Beaton: Riccio is in his room, Madam.

(BEATON *goes*)

Darnley: Then, who was it?

Mary: Have you any purpose in coming?

Darnley: Who was it?

Mary: A shadow, perhaps.

Darnley: By God!

Mary: The King, then.

Darnley: The King—what king? Who was it?

Mary: You are tiresome.

Darnley: Very well, then — look to it that Riccio's matter is not all.

Mary: Riccio's matter?

Darnley: The settlement with him.

Mary: Why did you come? It was not to see a shadow, or a king, or a fellow, or what you will?

Darnley: I came as a friend to warn you. About treason. Do not shelter it. Lest harm coming to it should soil you, too.

Mary: Treason, sir? You speak to the Queen.

Darnley: To be sure, yes. I forgot. I thought it was to one who played with the Queen's paramour. I thought I would warn her. I grow forgetful — I am so busy. A little scheme I have in hand, about the Queen's honour. That's you. Yes. In two days, or three, or before, perhaps. Pardon me, Madam, I should not intrude in the Queen's chamber — one never knows who may be in it. That shadow, now; I wonder. I must investigate — it might mean another scheme. Once you begin . . . I have a better tune for the song now — but another time, another time. But I would not shelter it.

(*He goes.* MARY *takes Elizabeth's picture, looks at it in the candle-light, and replaces it in the cabinet, then rings the bell.* BEATON *comes in*)

Mary: We will have supper here to-night. Tell them, will you? And ask Riccio to come. Come in when you have told them below, and prepare the table.

Beaton: Yes, Madam.

(*She goes.* MARY *takes a purse from the cabinet, sits, writing a letter, and a moment later* RICCIO *comes in*)

Riccio: Madam, the King was here again?

Mary: It's ill-named for him, but he was.

Riccio: I saw him on the green from my window. He was with my Lord Ruthven and two or three others, talking. I am afraid. What shall I do?

Mary: All is arranged. You are to meet the Lord Bothwell by Frobisher's Croft at midnight. A boat will be ready, and you will wait out at sea till a Danish ship takes you up. From Copenhagen you must make your own way to France. Here is money, and a letter to be delivered to Monsieur Carmé in Paris. He will help you if you need it.

Riccio (*taking the purse and letter*): Thank you, Madam. If I could but serve you better! But fate is against me.

Mary: Yes, my poor Riccio, fate is against you.

Riccio: I fear for you in this place. There's wickedness in it. If I were but happier in my fate — to shield you!

Mary: You must not let that trouble you. You have done what you could. We are but ourselves. Keep this.

(*She gives him a brooch from her sleeve. He takes it and kisses her hand.* BEATON *comes in*)

And now we can talk as friends, with no misgiving. (*She goes to the door and turns the key.*) Beaton, David leaves us to-night. A friendly sail to Denmark has relieved us of our anxieties.

(BEATON *puts wine, cups, and fruit on the table. They seat themselves. They eat and* MARY *pours out the wine*)

Riccio: If you were but coming to France, Madam. In a month how the glades will shine!

Mary: I have them in my mind. Though there are times when one lives too fiercely for the mind's landscapes to be clear. They come in tranquillity. Let us drink to France, the south, where the sun is.

(*They drink*)

Riccio: And to the queen whose beauty is like Provence. To Mary Stuart.

(*He and* MARY BEATON *drink*)

Mary: Would I were a better toast!

Riccio (*to* MARY BEATON): You should see the south, mistress. I hear talk of a love-match — the Lord Ogilvy of Boyne, it is said. It would make a sweet honeymoon.

Beaton: I am sure you have a shrewd judgment, Master Riccio.

Mary: Now, David, we will have none of these encouragements. Must I lose all my friends?

Riccio: There's an old fellow in Toulouse there who cobbles and makes flutes. There were never flutes like them. To hear one is to have the words come pit, pat, and there's a song as soon as you will. Everything there grows like that. Here it is as though one were under stones, damp, pressed down, all gloom. But there — ah, but, Madam, you know.

Beaton: You are glad to go?

Riccio: It all comes back — how can one help it? Though it is grief to go from so sweet a service. Even the wine is brighter there — my papers, Madam — shall I deliver them to you?

Mary: Yes — before you go. Will you remember Mary Stuart when you hear the cobbler's flute?

Riccio: I shall remember her always.

Mary: Safely at least, I hope, David.

Riccio: But I have no choice in going, Madam?

Mary: None. Life will be none the more civil for your loss, I will say that. Now sing to me for the last time, David.

Riccio (*singing*):

Green shoots we break the morning earth
And flourish in the morning's breath:
We leave the agony of birth
And soon are all midway to death.

While yet the summer of her year
Brings life her marvels, she can see
Far off the rising dust, and hear
The footfall of her enemy.

(*As he is ending, the handle of the door is turned, and then there is a loud knock*)

Mary: What's that?

(*The knocking is repeated.* RICCIO *and* MARY BEATON *rise*)

(*To* BEATON): See what it is.

(BEATON *goes to the door and opens it. Outside is a low murmur of voices.* DARNLEY *comes in*)

What does this mean?

Darnley: There are envoys here to speak with the secretary of the Queen.

Mary: They send a strange herald. Do kings turn grooms?

Darnley: I was coming —

Mary: But we sent word below that we had retired.

Darnley: And so the door was locked. I know. But a husband may be capricious. I found them, asking for the secretary of the Queen. They are waiting.

Mary: Let them come in.

Darnley: It is the secretary.

Riccio: Who are they, my lord?

Darnley: Who are they? Shall I go and ask them?

Riccio: Does Your Grace not know them?

Darnley: It is dark out there.

Riccio: Shall I go, Madam?

Mary (*to* DARNLEY): You swear you know nothing of this?

Darnley: I? Swear? Oh, yes, I swear.

Mary (*softly*): No, Riccio, I will go. (*She moves, across to the door. Then, loudly*—) Go, Riccio. See what they want. Your cloak — it's cold beyond.

(*She takes up* RICCIO'S *cloak, and throws it round her.* DARNLEY, *watching her almost in a dreadful hope, creeps away from the door. She is about to move out when* MARY BEATON *stops her*)

Beaton: Madam, this is wildness. Either it is nothing, or you take on a danger that you must not. (*To* DARNLEY) Why may they not come in here?

Darnley (*indifferently*): I know nothing, I tell you. If the Queen wills.

Mary: Very well. Go, Riccio.

Riccio: Is it safe?

Beaton: They would not dare, at the Queen's door.

Mary: Go. There can be nothing to fear. And we do not govern fate.

(RICCIO *goes out.* DARNLEY *moves across to the door. He locks it and takes the key*)

Darnley: The Queen has retired. Let us talk.

Mary: Why do you lock the door?

Darnley: I found it so! — I thought it was the Queen's will.

(*There is a loud scream outside, and running steps towards the door, which is beaten violently as* RICCIO *tries to enter. Then a struggle and scream upon scream. Then silence, and footsteps hurrying away*)

(MARY *and* BEATON *have moved to the door.* MARY *has taken the key from* DARNLEY, *but everything has happened in a moment.* MARY *moves to open the door, but holds back*)

Mary (*to* DARNLEY): Open it!

Darnley: I should have questioned them more closely.

Mary: Open.

(DARNLEY *unlocks and opens the door upon* RICCIO'S *body*)

Mary: For shame! A poor simpleton like that!

Darnley: I was in the Queen's chamber.

And no one knows. No one in Europe would believe it of the King of Scotland. But I was careless. I should have questioned them more closely.

(*He steps out over* RICCIO'S *body, and goes*)

Mary (*after a pause, looking down at* RICCIO): A fantastic nothing. Poor fellow. But the reckoning shall be as though for a great lover. Go, Beaton. Bid them come up. Have the watch summoned. Let him be taken away. This is his poor little tragedy. Ours remains. Go.

(BEATON *goes out.* MARY *closes the door. She goes to the window, and draws back the curtain, filling the room with bright moonlight. She looks out. Beyond the door men are heard moving the body of* RICCIO. *Then* BEATON *returns*)

Beaton: Madam.

Mary: Yes, Beaton.

Beaton: My Lord Bothwell is below. He wants to speak to you. He beckoned me from the shadow. He is at the yard corner.

Mary: Bothwell?

Beaton: Yes, madam.

Mary: Bothwell is nothing. As Riccio was nothing. Darnley... Darnley is the King, Beaton. A king may be nothing.

Beaton: Shall I tell my Lord Bothwell to come?

Mary: Have they taken him away?

Beaton: David Riccio? Yes, Madam.

Mary: I cannot see Bothwell to-night. To-morrow, perhaps.

Beaton: He is very persistent, Madam.

Mary: Not to-night, Beaton.

(BEATON *goes.* MARY *looks out into the night again, silent for a few moments, and then sings softly*)

Though brighter wit I had than these,
  Their cunning brought me down,
But Mary's love-story shall please
  Better than their renown.

Not Riccio nor Darnley knew
  Nor Bothwell how to find
This Mary's best magnificence
  Of the great lover's mind.

(*The candle gutters out*)
(*She throws the window open to the balcony*)
(*Voices as of a dream are heard beyond.* MARY *stands listening*)

First Voice: It's a damned silly song. What's it all about . . .

Second Voice: Look at this queen. She tells you, does n't she, does n't she?

First Voice: What does a dead queen know about me? You talk nonsense. The moon has your wits; you're like that crazy singer out there. Mary Stuart can tell me nothing, I say.

(MARY *goes along the balcony, out of sight*)

My God! What's that?

The Voice of Mary: Boy, I can tell you everything.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

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